

## GEORGE C. MARSHALL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES: LESSONS FOR TODAY'S STRATEGIC LEADERS

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2010

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. <b>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</b>					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 25-02-2010		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE George C. Marshall Strategic Leadership Competencies: Lessons for Today's Strategic Leaders				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey A. Boyer				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Christopher Bolan Department of Distance Education				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT A visionary military and civilian leader, General George C. Marshall was an innovative strategic leader. The use of his well developed strategic leader competencies to influence key stakeholders through a detailed strategic communications plan and his ability to build consensus while synchronizing interagency capabilities are vital lessons for today's strategic leaders. The Marshall Plan was an in-depth and well articulated post World War II plan that fostered an interagency approach to reconstruction in Europe in support of American national interests resulting in a myriad of new military and economic alliances. In today's modern, global interconnected world, American strategy demands strategic leaders adept at developing and executing strategic communications that build consensus and leverage all the interagency capabilities. The 21 <sup>st</sup> century threats and opportunities our nation faces span the spectrum of conflict and it's vital that today's leaders learn from a master like George C. Marshall. His display of the strategic leader competencies to strategically communicate and build consensus influencing a host of key stakeholders along with synchronizing our interagency capabilities are key tenants for future strategic success.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Strategic Communications, Consensus Building, and Interagency Coordination					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT  UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES  34	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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FOR TODAY'S STRATEGIC LEADERS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**AUTHOR:** Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey A. Boyer

**TITLE:** George C. Marshall Strategic Leadership Competencies: Lessons for Today's Strategic Leaders

**FORMAT:** Strategy Research Project

**DATE:** 25 February 2010    **WORD COUNT:** 7,524    **PAGES:** 34

**KEY TERMS:** Strategic Communications, Consensus Building, and Interagency Coordination

**CLASSIFICATION:** Unclassified

A visionary military and civilian leader, General George C. Marshall was an innovative strategic leader. The use of his well developed strategic leader competencies to influence key stakeholders through a detailed strategic communications plan and his ability to build consensus while synchronizing interagency capabilities are vital lessons for today's strategic leaders. The Marshall Plan was an in-depth and well articulated post World War II plan that fostered an interagency approach to reconstruction in Europe in support of American national interests resulting in a myriad of new military and economic alliances. In today's modern, global interconnected world, American strategy demands strategic leaders adept at developing and executing strategic communications that build consensus and leverage all the interagency capabilities. The 21<sup>st</sup> century threats and opportunities our nation faces span the spectrum of conflict and it's vital that today's leaders learn from a master like George C. Marshall. His display of the strategic leader competencies to strategically communicate and build consensus influencing a host of key stakeholders along with synchronizing our interagency capabilities are key tenants for future strategic success.

## GEORGE C. MARSHALL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES: LESSONS FOR TODAY'S STRATEGIC LEADERS

The post World War II era was the most complex global period during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Successfully resolving the long-standing struggles in Europe and solidifying a future of economic and security stability on the continent was a vital American interest. General George C. Marshall was quick to recognize the strategic importance of European economic recovery and building security relationships. His leadership in successfully achieving these central U.S. objectives provides a host of lessons learned for today's strategic leaders. "If we decide to do this thing, I know we can do it successfully. And there's no doubt in my mind that the whole world hangs in the balance."<sup>1</sup> Words spoken and lived by George C. Marshall – the professional combat Soldier – the adept national security strategist – the revered statesman. General Marshall transcends time as he evolved into one of the preeminent strategic leaders in history during the most complex wartime periods into an astute Army Chief of Staff, then Secretary of Defense, and ultimately leading the post World War II era and the bulk of humanity into a modern world as Secretary of State. His mastery of key strategic leader competencies are lessons that modern military and civilian leaders as strategists need to learn from as we embark on a 21<sup>st</sup> century in a global, interconnect world economy with a host of new threats and emerging peer competitors.

Our nation operates in a globalized environment with a host of foreign and domestic priorities, influenced by allies, non-state threats, and transnational actors. This operating environment involves rising Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic (DIME) threats, opportunities, and peer competitors. Our nation as a superpower has

vast resources and capabilities at our disposal but today's leaders must have the vision and ability to influence a vast array of audiences to fully leverage and synchronize our DIME elements of national power. George C. Marshall was truly a "change agent" to overcome the limits of a unilateral approach and a visionary that today's strategic leaders must learn from to navigate for continued 21<sup>st</sup> century American success in hopes of maintaining long-lasting prosperity.

The post World War II era could have rapidly spiraled into continued chaos, war, depravation and devastation if not for George C. Marshall's leadership and use of his strategic leadership competencies. His ability to communicate a strategic vision to diverse audiences at home and abroad, his keen consensus-building skills, and his recognition of the importance of harnessing the energies and talents existing across the full range of U.S. government interagency organizations averted disaster. Europe was a divided continent as most nations endured massive infrastructure and economic devastation and the world became polarized as U.S. Russia superpower heated up. Studying George C. Marshall's leadership during this period can benefit contemporary senior leaders who find themselves confronting similar challenges with strategic communications, building international and regional consensus behind U.S. policy initiatives, and struggling to improve interagency synchronization across the USG.

The Joint Publication, 3-13, Information Operations provides a definition of strategic communications that identifies three key objectives for a strategic communications campaign that we should learn from George C. Marshall,

Focused United States Government (USG) efforts to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of USG interests, policies, and objectives through use of coordinated programs, plans, themes and

messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all the elements of power.<sup>2</sup>

George C. Marshall provides us great examples of a leader who develops consensus and strategically communicates a shared “vision” of the future. His vision and strategic leader competencies are skills today’s leaders must grasp and leverage to master strategic communications.

His ability to harness, exploit and refine his capabilities in these critical areas allowed him to usher in an era which fostered the rise of American global power. His actions brought much needed political, economic, and military stability to Europe including the emergence of new global and regional institutions such as World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His leadership style contributed to his strategic communications plan facilitating his ability to assemble domestic and international support for the “The Marshall Plan” or “European Economic Recovery Plan”. His address at the Harvard University graduation on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1947 was a great example of strategic communications when he leveraged this low-key, non-political event with ample press coverage to introduce “The Marshall Plan” in a ten minute speech. His ability to form and leverage the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) as a global strategic communications tool that synergized national broadcasting giants like ABC and NBC to broadcast from Paris, the capital of a key nation still torn between western and communist influences was vital. The ECA served as his on the ground, local European strategic communications center with his key leaders personally engaged with European leaders and reinforced the ERP key messages to the general population; both audiences’ keys to success. His use of this new television technology along with



the Mutual Broadcasting System's weekly radio program reached both foreign and domestic key audiences with the themes and message articulating his future vision.<sup>3</sup>

#### Strategic Communications Competencies: Then and Now

His experiences as a General and an astute awareness as a civilian leader enabled him to evaluate both the potential negative impacts and positive opportunities on America's national interests during the post World War II period which led to clear strategic communications. He understood American values and the host of sacrifices Americans, at all levels made within our society which empowered his rhetoric to resonate when he said, "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos."<sup>4</sup> His espoused statements hit home with the average American who might not have heard of "Maslows' hierarchy of needs" theory, but could truly understand our basic values of the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". His long-term approach to the strategic communications plan and vigilant attention to domestic opinion resulted in popular approval of his ERP ranging from 61% - 79% between 1949 and 1951.<sup>5</sup>

His unique ability to articulate a strategic message that resonates with different audiences like the American people, executive and congressional leaders, and an international community of our allies, recently defeated European states, and a rising Soviet Empire threat is a vital skill to emulate. Using his ten minute speech as a platform to open debate, he clarified the plans strategic intent hitting key themes and messages that the U.S. would not simply be "filling a shopping list" for Europe. Rather our "Friendly Aid" would be our part of an integrated plan for European nations "acting cooperatively" to take the initiative and responsibility for their own recovery plan.<sup>6</sup> This was an important step in his detailed strategic communications plan that had as its

principle objective to overcome the growing U.S. isolationist sentiment after the long war. It remains vital to build the broad public consensus behind U.S. policy to enhance the credibility of strategic communications that support action.

Our current ongoing “persistent conflict” operations and lack of a deliberate strategic communications campaign are why George C. Marshall's ability to deliver themes and messages through a host of synchronized leaders are keys for today's strategic leaders. Unlike the environment then, today's leaders operate with 24/7 news coverage that can facilitate strategic communications to allies. Another complexity today's leaders face is a wider audience, finding ways to build a communications campaign to bridge cultural differences with non-Western governments, elites and diverse populations, i.e. Arab, Asian, etc. publics is a challenge, whereas Marshall had the advantage of dealing primarily with European audiences.

George C. Marshall was an adept statesman who knew his “area of influence” was broader than just U.S. domestic audiences like Congress, industry, financial institutions and the American public. His international experience gave him the foresight to tailor his strategic communications plan with themes and messages to reach and influence a myriad of foreign audiences. His strategic communications campaign plan reached allies, recently defeated governments, foreign investors, and the people of those European nations ravished by war. Marshall recognized the need for experts to lead “America's information campaign” abroad and one key task for him was to pick the Head of the Information Division, Office of Special Representative, Paris (OSR). He recruited from the top American newspapers, magazines and radio networks and appointed Alfred Friendly as initial Information Director in Paris in 1948.<sup>7</sup> A reporter for

the Washington Daily News and Post, Friendly during the war period mastered the arts of gaining, spreading, leaking and concealing information and with routine guidance from Marshall had a firm grasp of the big picture. Marshall utilized him as an experienced journalist who spoke both German and French to achieve these two primary responsibilities aimed at maintaining positive European support:

- Keep Europe's public sufficiently informed to gain enough favorable publicity to assure their cooperation
- Keep the American home front apprised in order to sustain congressional and political support with ample funding to continue the American generosity abroad.<sup>8</sup>

Marshall realized the multidimensional strategic communication audiences vital to ERP success and leveraged his wartime rapport with British leaders Winston Churchill and Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin. Furthermore, he empowered his American team to succeed through their development of key relationships. George C. Marshall executed a global communications campaign plan that adeptly balanced his ties with European key leaders in Britain and France without using too much domestic political capital. This delicate balance was essential as Marshall had to maintain his primary theme that the ERP was a European supported plan that would ultimately meet U.S. national interests through expanded security and trade opportunities. His well timed Harvard speech was quickly depicted as a positive, European favorable plan as The British Broadcasting Corporation correspondent Leonard Maill transmitted a part of Marshall's Harvard University speech for London's 9:00 pm news. British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin listened closely and quickly acted on the lifeline that Europe was

given and within days had “taken the initiative and responsibility” for Europe and organized a meeting in late June in Paris with the French and Soviet Union foreign ministers to discuss a plan for Europe.<sup>9</sup> Marshall seized the strategic communications opportunity to establish the OSR and cultivate his prior relationships with European leaders in order to build consensus. American strategic leaders operating in our global environment must identify those key stakeholders and execute a synchronized strategic communications.

Our nation’s involvement in “persistent conflict” describes our security environment for at least the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, outlining threats we’ll face and our approach to a long-term view towards conflict. The current administration faces a host of strategic communication challenges and could benefit from several of Marshall’s effective techniques. Today’s global communication boom provides a vastly more challenging age for senior leaders to navigate and with a “shorter fuse” to be first with our themes and messages, ahead of our enemies, other news agencies, and a myriad of interest groups – “flash to bang is now nearly simultaneous”. However, strategic planning is crucial and must lead to a strategic communications campaign founded on our national interests seeking to build consensus amongst our domestic and international audiences and stakeholders. I propose that our current and previous administrations could have learned the lessons of our past and been much more effective strategic communicators as was Marshall and his team to achieve clarity and unity of effort in this age of persistent conflict in a global environment.

The Bush Administration fought this two-war front as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), yet the initial strategic communications mistakes quickly reduced

this global war in the Iraq theatre to a unilateral effort with great support from our historic British allies. Despite the multitude of countries that supported the war in Afghanistan and subsequent invasion of Iraq, the U.S. senior leaderships' failure to gain legitimacy; both with domestic and international audiences through a clear strategic communications plan hindered our global efforts. In an international environment, perceptions can damage U.S. legitimacy and hinder us in meeting our strategic communications and consensus-building objectives. For example, when U.S. policy is perceived to counter Geneva Conventions and other recognized treaties based on Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay operations, U.S. strategic communications become significantly harder and we lose focus on our key themes and messages.

Despite early strategic communication successes in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the multilateral efforts in Afghanistan, failures by the Bush administration due to unclear – ambiguous messages for invading Iraq hampered U.S. credibility. The inability to build consensus for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and marginal international credibility for the invasion stemmed from a lack of well articulated themes and messages; in essence a failed strategic communications plan. The U.S. always seemed to be catching up to key strategic story lines and shifting justifications for the invasion from WMD, to regime change or the connections to terrorists detracted from our strategic communications plan. Although a solid strategic communications plan can't fix "flawed strategic decisions", the lack of a coordinated, complementary communications plan for our two-front GWOT cost the U.S. a lot of political capital. What the Bush administration failed to globally communicate, the Obama administration

seeks to clarify through their strategic message of “shared responsibility” - the foundation for their strategic communications plan in their new era of engagement.

Despite this common theme of engagement, recent decisions by the Obama Administration to focus efforts on the persistent conflict in Afghanistan as vital to our national interests have been hampered by some strategic communication mistakes. Soon after taking office, President Obama in an April 2009 speech stated something to the effect, “that Afghanistan is the key U.S. victory that our nation must win” to secure those national interests at stake.<sup>10</sup> This initial executive level guidance formed our national strategy as written guidance often arrives late after a new administration takes office, and little written strategy was available to Marshall during his tenure. The initial Obama administration decisions that followed (reference our commitment to OEF) came amidst a growing U.S. economic crisis, rising unemployment, housing market devastation, bailout concerns, and a global recession. These competing foreign and domestic crises created a complex environment, in a resource constrained period much like the post-WWII period Marshall navigated and resulted in a strategic communications void through November 2009. Most likely the strategic messages related to the Afghanistan-Pakistan crises were drowned out with media attention focused on the host of other ongoing; domestic related crises at the time. Marshall was a visionary and foresaw an American future of prosperity; one with expanded economic opportunities and enhanced global security partners as national interests. He provided the leadership and credence to the communications plan that helped America avoid falling back into our isolationist shell and fostered an European economic recovery and a myriad of new allies, economic and security, thus meeting our national objectives.

President Obama is also a visionary strategic leader who seeks “shared responsibility” through consensus-building, yet his first year in office has been mired by a lack of strategic guidance, but with steady improvements in communication.

As stated earlier, strategic communications should support our national strategy and interests, with well coordinated and timely themes and messages targeted towards a myriad of audiences. Unfortunately, this strategic guidance gap resulting from no published National Security Strategy (NSS), the absence of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and the outdated 2006 National Military Strategy (NMS) hinders strategic communications. President Obama has sought to fill this void of written national strategy with verbal communications during his “surge” speech at the United States Military Academy (USMA) and his 2010 State of the Union Address. To his administration’s credit, his espoused values and priorities are supported through action and his strategy of engagement works well to deliver these key messages. He fully leverages his key leaders; Secretaries Clinton and Gates, and CJCS Admiral Mullen to reinforce these messages. Therefore, the Obama administration has “righted the ship” and like Marshall, have adapted to the changing operational environment to overcome these early strategic communication mistakes.

#### Consensus-Building Competencies: Then and Now

George C. Marshall was a self-aware leader, who like President Obama transitioned from one aspect of federal leadership to another, and Marshall’s recognition of the new skills required as Secretary of State are wisdom for any strategic leader to aspire to:

It became clear to me that at age 58 I would have to learn new tricks that were taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield. In this position I am a political Soldier and will have to put my training of the back burner,

and have to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills.<sup>11</sup>

Marshall clearly displays his strategic leadership competency as a consensus-builder as he developed new skills as Secretary of State, yet leveraged the personal leadership competencies he honed as a General. I believe President Obama and his key leaders; Secretaries Gates and Clinton, along with US Ambassador to UN, Susan Rice and Admiral Mullen have adapted and adopted the arts of persuasion and diplomacy to articulate his era of engagement strategy. The basic tenants of this era of engagement involve improving our ability to listen to the host of key stakeholders; our allies, international peers and potential adversaries, our Congress, and the American people along with providing complementary messages. The Obama administration is on the right path to build the consensus necessary for global security and prosperity and have displayed the persuasion and guile as strategic communicator's to achieve our national interests.

President Obama's theme of an "era of engagement" resonates with his top military advisor, Admiral Mullen, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) who sees a need to take a closer look at strategic communication: Getting Back to Basics.<sup>12</sup> He states that in today's global environment the lines between strategic, operational, and tactical lines are blurred beyond distinction and that "instant messages" can and often do drive national security decision-making. The key point is that we must not become hostages to the "instant messages", but build relationships, trust and credibility amongst the myriad of audiences; foreign and domestic who are vital to success. This is similar to what George C. Marshall did as Secretary of State in what was just as complex a world-stage during the post WWII conflict era. Admiral Mullen's defines the strategic



communications issue as: “I believe we have walked away from the original intent. By *organizing* to it – creating whole structures *around* it – we have allowed strategic communications to become a thing instead of a process”.<sup>13</sup> Good examples of improvements in communications that build consensus are the consultations with Congress on the Afghanistan surge strategy and Secretary Gates engagement with NATO leaders to drum-up support for additional contributions.

For example, the Bush administration’s attempt to structure an executive level strategic communication cell was severely ineffective. This cell failed as often Secretaries Rumsfeld and Powell were distinctly delivering different, untimely, and unsynchronized messages that only “muddled” communication efforts. These disconnects resulted in unclear delivery of our national interests at stake and strategy. Admiral Mullen, a student of history; references the economic recovery of Europe after WWII acknowledging George C. Marshall as a great strategic communicator, “the Marshall Plan made it clear that our strength was only as good as it was shared”, a simple, yet well articulated message to a myriad of audiences.<sup>14</sup> Clearly strategy and national interests drive a strategic communications plan that seeks to build consensus.

Admiral Mullen is a key leader who knows the importance of consensus-building and supports President Obama’s strategic goals and states; “No, our biggest problem isn’t men in caves, its credibility. Our messages lack credibility because we, the strategic leaders haven’t invested enough time in building trust and relationships.”<sup>15</sup> This strategic leadership trait of consensus-building is the second key lesson learned from Marshall.

George Marshall – the man with sterling character, who commanded respect from both domestic political parties, foreign leaders and was held as an iconic hero by the people was a great asset and the ultimate consensus-builder. Credibility matters when trying to build consensus, a strategic leadership trait Marshall exuded with his high standards, his intensity, self-control, patriotism and humility. He leveraged these traits and sought out key leaders and legislators who held these same values building consensus across the executive and legislative branches. Although he was a world-wide known leader his single voice would not be enough to execute the complex and costly ERP that required domestic and international consensus for success. Success was contingent on a team of leaders that could deliver their strategic communications message to different audiences and influence distinct groups simultaneously and change current isolationist views. For instance, the Republican majority congress aligned with Southern democrats to form a strong 1947 coalition seeking to contract, not expand the USG role after WWII. To support his objective Secretary Marshall encouraged President Truman to authorize the “Harriman Committee” to study Foreign Aid which was fundamental to Marshall’s consensus-building aims to influence Congress and the press.<sup>16</sup> Marshall garnered all his strategic leadership skills to build the consensus necessary to support the ERP founded on a solid communications plan and influencing key stakeholders.

These concerns of garnering American and legislators support for the ERP were daunting tasks that Marshall had to overcome using effective consensus-building techniques. His State Departments task was two-fold; to persuade congress of ERP viability, a modern day Feasibility-Acceptable-Suitable (FAS) test; and convince

legislators that the American people wanted this as well.<sup>17</sup> The bipartisan Harriman Committee consisted of congressman, business, labor and academia leaders which lead to a broad base for consensus-building. Marshall's ability to influence key legislators, Averell Harriman and Paul Hoffman to embark on a superhuman speaking schedule was a combat multiplier in his consensus-building efforts. Harriman and Hoffman's personal crusade across the West and Midwest won over communities of isolationists and acceptance by business leader's building-consensus for the Marshall Plan months before the Congressional vote.<sup>18</sup> Marshall was in tune with the political powerbrokers of the day and quickly identified Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, Senator Arthur Vandenberg as a key stakeholder.

Marshall sought Vandenberg's "buy in" by including him in pre-hearing planning sessions and they met repeatedly on neutral turf at the Blair House to hammer out strategy to gain congressional support for the ERP.<sup>19</sup> He tied his persuasion efforts for Congress to our U.S. national interests and the vital importance for a stable Europe with economic and military allies against the consequences to the U.S. if we simply ignored the de-stabilization of 270 million people. Political historians remain amazed at the scale and thoroughness of Marshall's State Department preparations to overcome its initial ERP unpopularity on Capitol Hill, in particular Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg, a former isolationist whose political support was indispensable.<sup>20</sup>

George C. Marshall maximized his consensus-building skills to support his strategic theme and messages and sent his key advisor, George Keenan, to help the 14 European nation delegation gathered in Paris to shape their proposals as politically acceptable to our Congress. With his case planted with congress, he turned his

attention to the American people and spent the winter and spring of 1947-48 traveling across America launching an impressive grass roots consensus-building campaign.

An astute strategic leader he knew this audience was different and required a different persuasive approach. Marshall stated:

I worked as hard as I though I was running for the Presidency. That's what I'm proud of, that part of it, because I had foreigners, tobacco people, cotton people, New York eastern industrialists and the whole West Coast just going in the other directions.<sup>21</sup>

His domestic messages had to equally appeal to a diverse group of elites, businessmen, and the common man and hinged on the prospect of American economic prosperity with expanded European trade and new U.S. markets seeking to breakdown the U.S. Isolationist views. Marshall adeptly tied his consensus-building campaign to our economic national interests and benefits to which businessmen and the common man could relate. Ultimately on April 3, 1948 President Truman signed the plan and upon completion in 1951 the 13 billion distributed represented .5% of the U.S. gross domestic product, which in today's dollars would equate to \$200 billion – what a great return on investment with our allies. Our past two U.S. administrations have had different results in team building efforts that have affected our strategic abilities, resulting in varying levels of effective strategic communications and our interagency coordination capability.

President Bush's administration successfully built domestic consensus and support for initial Iraq operations backed by one of the most experienced foreign policy elite-teams in U.S. history. Yet his administration failed to harness that experienced team to achieve international "unity of effort" or consensus that was vital to long-term success. The Bush Administration's initial OIF operational success didn't capitalize on past lessons learned as post-war efforts were significantly unplanned and under

resourced and weakened initial consensus for U.S. led operations quickly dwindled. Unlike Marshall who complemented his consensus-building skills with a clear strategic communications plan, President Bush built his team mainly around his father's "old guard" – with ineffective results. The mix of seasoned political leaders like Cheney and Rumsfeld with another highly credible and trusted leader like Colin Powell who held different views on the use of military force hindered gaining UN support and international unity of effort. Although these trusted agents Cheney and Rumsfeld were savvy – their often polarizing and elitist leadership style created seams in the executive branch and marginalized key strategic leaders. President Bush's inability to synchronize his strategic leaders negatively impacted the administrations ability to build consensus in the domestic and international communities. The need to gain international legitimacy to invade Iraq placed Secretary Powell in an uncomfortable position – countering his "Powell Doctrine" to use overwhelming force.

This lack of consensus-building worsened as Secretary Rumsfeld won support for his "minimal force" invasion strategy seeking to leverage our 21<sup>st</sup> century, technologically advanced military. As major combat operations ceased the U.S. leadership found little consensus with no WMD discovered, insufficient forces for stability operations in a growing insurgency, and growing international concerns with our "interpretation of laws" regarding detainees and interrogation techniques. Unlike Marshall who was a master at building consensus with an abundance of credibility, the Bush administration strategic communication battles that thwarted consensus-building efforts. Although President Bush fell short of building strong consensus initially, he was an adaptive leader who strengthened his second term with Secretaries Gates and Rice,

improving his team and their consensus-building capabilities. Secretary Rice brought her expertise as National Security Advisor (NSA) and foreign relations experience to the State Department – the key cabinet to build credibility and consensus. Fortunately, President Obama’s strategy of engagement provided a foundation of consensus—building and retaining Secretary Gates while adding world recognized leaders like Secretary Clinton, Ambassador Susan Rice, and Admiral Mullen as CJCS solidified his team.

Despite some strategic communication missteps noted earlier, the Obama administration did focus on building-consensus through his strategy of “an era of engagement” seeking “shared responsibility” for these global crises. President Obama recognized, as Marshall stated in his need to develop new skills for his position as Secretary of State to properly transition his administration during ongoing conflicts, the need to build consensus. President Obama retained respected Secretary of Defense Gates to anchor his team as he navigated his first year in office while attempting to revitalize the U.S. economy, stimulating job and housing markets, and committing to health care reform which are daunting tasks when not involved in “persistent conflict”. His astute awareness of the political necessity to build-consensus during these times of domestic and foreign crises served him well as he built a quality team that focused on the same strategic theme and national interests.

From the beginning Secretaries Gates and Clinton have articulated common messages founded on the theme of engagement appearing together in various international; domestic and political forums to build consensus. Their joint appearances the weekend after President Obama’s surge speech on two national, Washington D.C.

based domestic and foreign relations shows reinforced “shared responsibilities” goal to support a balanced U.S. approach to competing priorities. Ambassador Rice’s messages to the UN complimented Admiral Mullen’s discussions with NATO allies after the President’s “Afghanistan surge” speech at the USMA that bolstered building consensus in our “era of engagement”. These were vital lessons learned from Marshall’s use of his key team members to articulate the themes for successful strategic communications and consensus-building. Admiral Mullen truly recognizes the “art of communications” as a process, not a structure and his voice with key partners in Pakistan, Afghanistan and leadership in DOD round out an effective President Obama team. We’ve displayed the need for a quality “Marshall like” strategic communications plan and identified the vital need to build a team of key leaders who understand the themes and can deliver cohesive messages. Building this team which rightly so includes civilian leaders, often with different views and from different organizational cultures is a strategic leader’s challenge, one George C. Marshall faced when leading our nation through post WWII.

The art of consensus-building with a mixture of civilian leadership and military commanders trying to reach both the international and domestic communities is daunting. Although the OIF strategy to transition post-war operations to civilian leadership during Phase IV in Iraq existed, the structure lacked the required authority to be effective. Unlike the benefit Marshall gained from the ECA with its direct line to President Truman, the post war Iraq stability organization, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) lacked both independence and Cabinet status.<sup>22</sup> The CPA like the ECA

was an *ad hoc* organization, yet the CPA reported directly to Secretary Rumsfeld and lacked the required authority to effectively build consensus.

The insertion of Paul Bremer as CPA Chief to lead U.S. post-war reconstruction efforts was problematic from the start. The road away from success for the CPA began when the Bush administration opted to sell Iraq's rebuilding strategy to Congress and the American people as requiring almost no national sacrifice.<sup>23</sup> This CPA strategic communications theme set the wrong tone, unlike The Marshall Plan leaders who consistently communicated the message of American generosity and selflessness to support the ERP. Unfortunately the Bush administration at times had to switch strategic messages reference Iraq post war reconstruction that thwarted their consensus-building efforts. For example, Secretary Wolfowitz insisted that the reconstruction and recovery burden could be shouldered by Iraq itself with revenues from expanded oil sales, a notion that never materialized.<sup>24</sup> Unlike Marshall who clearly understood the power of credibility, the OIF strategic leaders during the CPA period often had power struggles and personality conflicts that impeded consensus-building. The U.S. survived this period and the placement of new leaders with abundant credibility and consensus-building skills like Generals Crocker and Petraeus provided the foundation for success.

General Petraeus leveraged his credibility to strategically communicate his vision and thus build consensus for the surge, ultimately improving the credibility of the Bush Administration, the key to gaining consensus. Like Marshall, General Petraeus built a great team, then based on his vision empowered the key members to voice the strategic communications messages to all the key stakeholders; Congress, domestic and foreign public; allies; governments and the Iraqi people and government. He truly learned



lessons from the past and leveraged the strategic value of building consensus across a myriad of audiences. Petraeus consistently built on his “troop surge” strategy and theme, often flying back to D.C. for personal contact with President Bush and the NSC leaders to build the consensus required to influence our legislators and American people. President Bush broke normal military protocol and often held direct VTCs with General Petraeus for updates and build consensus amongst field commanders - a view Congress saw as vital to any surge. Once you deliver your strategic communications message and build consensus it’s vital to synergize the interagency process to fully leverage the vast capabilities of the USG.

#### Interagency Coordination: Then and Now

Now, the third strategic leadership competency that George C. Marshall provides us to effectively execute complex strategy today is leveraging interagency cooperation. Specifically, Marshall understood the invaluable synergy a “whole of government” or coordinated interagency approach provides us to meet national interests – part of the JIMI, and especially, the interagency coordination we seek.

George C. Marshall was a visionary who evolved into one of the world’s most well recognized leaders. His ability to coordinate foreign and domestic agencies is a “must study” for today’s leaders. Marshall recognized the synergistic interagency capabilities to strategic execution; focused on national interests; with a long-term view of the global economic boom and opportunities the ERP presented with enhanced military and economic alliances. Having served at all echelons of government and understanding the political, social, economic cultures of both the U.S. and Europe enabled him to coordinate an unprecedented interagency process. Despite a less complex government then, it was no less polarized by parties, constituents; and

American isolationist sentiment, creating an operational environment equivalent to today's global economic and security context. Marshall navigated that terrain with a common theme to coordinate and synchronize our interagency process working together towards known objectives along the same lines of operation. Today's strategic leaders must improve on interagency cooperation to synchronize our elements of power as we've learned to leverage Joint processes resulting from the 1986 Gold-Waters Nichols Act. The next generation of leaders must be interagency focused from planning, training, and through execution to maintain America's security and prosperity.

One positive approach to improving interagency coordination is this administrations goal of synchronizing and leveraging our instruments of power with the new State Department Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review (QDDR).<sup>25</sup> The QDDR is a strategy planning process to tie together national level policy through an integrated strategy using various synchronized actions to provide a short, medium, and long-term blueprint for our diplomatic and development efforts. Today's strategic leaders lead by President Obama and Secretary Clinton are more thoroughly integrating diplomacy and development into national strategy. Using these two elements of power supports their strategic "era of engagement" theme as they reach out diplomatically and with economic development in a "whole of government" approach. I see these as valuable 21<sup>st</sup> century tools used like George C. Marshall did when he brought all DIME elements to bear on the complex post WWII European reconstruction and stability issues with great success. I'd argue that Marshall used "a whole of government" approach as a combat multiplier for the most complex situation in the 20th century.

This overarching QDDR review aims to bring traditional stovepipe organizations like Department of State and USAID (now a subordinate State Department organization) together. This new shared vision and common goals seek to synchronize actions and objectives with DOD to meet strategic challenges. The goal supports developing international treaties and seizing opportunities with a process to guide the USG in a holistic approach to becoming agile, responsive, and effective institutions of diplomacy and development. This parallels the interagency synergy that Marshall recognized as vital to the Marshall plan which hinged on mutually supportive diplomatic, informational, military and economic actions. Secretary Clinton during an address to the Council on Foreign Relations on July 15, 2009 reinforced the QDDR's intent stating,

Building the architecture of global cooperation requires us to devise the right policies and use the right tools to connect our economic and military strengths with our allies, thus building credibility.<sup>26</sup>

The end state focuses on synchronizing the diplomatic and economic (development) actions through a quality information campaign. This will guide the State Department and USAID with policies, resource allocation, staff training and deployment that enhance interagency coordination and leverage shared international responsibilities.

The final QDDR report seeks diplomatic, informational, and economic elements of power working side by side with a strong military to pave the way for a “shared responsibility” and prosperity. One key objective is to improve our foreign relations image to gain and reestablish the international trust and credibility the current administration sees as damaged. This fosters consensus-building and with Presidential support, CJCS, Admiral Mullen sees an opportunity for America to build relationships and enhance our credibility which supports interagency cooperation. Admiral Mullen states, “this new engagement strategy looks to gain a global cooperation vital to security

domestically and abroad in the modern coalition with “shared responsibility” in our global operating environment.<sup>27</sup> As stated earlier, Secretary Clinton is in tune with the military leadership and recognizes the need for a State Department vision that is properly resourced by Congress to fully synchronize our elements of power and maximize interagency cooperation.

The aim of Secretary Clinton as a strategic leader is to provide the vision and resources necessary while developing interagency relationships through the QDDR. Her leadership will require a Marshall like dogmatic approach to develop an effective QDDR (the ERP for Marshall), establishing consistent themes and messages, and influencing the power stakeholders (a myriad from other USG agencies, Congress, influential lobby groups, etc). Her State Department leaders, at every echelon must articulate the theme of “an era of engagement” with a robust strategic communications plan to build consensus for more State Department resources. Secretary Clintons’ end state to provide her State Department with a plan, clear priorities and hard fought limited resources from congress is admirable, yet extremely difficult. Despite current deficits and supplemental funding, resources will always be constrained, but the QDDR is a great 21<sup>st</sup> century model to build on to identify established goals, prioritize programs, to fight for resources and measure results. Guided by a strategic leader focused on improving interagency coordination and leveraging all instruments of power, the QDDR is a modern Marshall Plan concept for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Secretary Clinton contends that national security and U.S. interests are better served by reducing the current imbalance between “hard” and “soft” power through use of “smart power”.<sup>28</sup> Leveraging this smart power requires commitment, “a put your

money where your mouth is” legislative support that resources the QDDR to provide agile, responsive and effective diplomatic and development capabilities. This shift in budget priorities in these times of economic recovery and increasing debt coupled with likely reduction or removal of DOD supplements will impact DOD priorities (a necessary evil to support interagency coordination). Responsibilities requires resources and congressional commitment to a \$50 billion dollar foreign aid and international operations bill is a great step towards balancing hard and soft powers and better utilize “smart power”. The QDDR is not only seen from diplomats and foreign development perspectives as a great strategic tool but senior leaders in DOD and the Chairman, JCS as an overdue necessity, signs of improving interagency coordination.

Secretary of Defense Gates truly understands the relevance and synergistic value of strong diplomatic and development tools and the need to adequately resource those agencies is the best approach to accomplishing our national objectives. His statement reinforces the interagency cooperation and the “whole of government” approach vital for success while understanding that DOD budgets will likely shrink to support additional funding for these Foreign Service agencies. While not completely unselfish, Secretary Gates and CJCS, Admiral Mullen have had ongoing concerns that repeatedly the military has been forced to take on functions such as basic development work and humanitarian relief, known as “mission creep”. These missions are embedded in federal law as tasks handled by State Department agencies , but they lack capability due to insufficient resources and lack of available civilian personnel and expertise.<sup>29</sup> In July 2008, Secretary Gates supported this “whole of government” approach and the interagency benefits of improving our use of “soft” power, stating;

Our diplomatic leaders – be they in ambassador’s suites or on the state Departments’ seventh floor – must have the resources and political support to fully exercise their statutory responsibility in leading American foreign policy<sup>30</sup>

Strategic leaders just like Marshall must build consensus and the QDDR endorsement by the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC), which includes advisory boards of dozens of retired generals, as well as 10 former Secretary of states, pentagon chiefs and national security advisors provides additional credibility to this approach. Marshall truly recognized the synergy gained from mutually supportive diplomatic and developmental efforts, all based on a strong military that provides the foundation of security and stability paramount to success.

Today’s leaders have learned those lessons. Now legislators must not be short sighted (a political view) to lose our way ahead and must capitalize on the interagency coordination and synergy that exists. Let the QDDR serve as a basis for new interagency legislation and necessary funding as the 1986 Gold-Water Nichols Act did as the catalyst to overarching joint policy reform so our interagency processes mirror the success of our joint processes. Secretary Marshall had that holistic, long term view and it seems today’s leader are also “getting in step” working towards a “whole of government” approach with well understood and articulated strategic objectives. Progress continues to meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century threats and opportunities as strategic leaders identify new focus areas, geographical and functional and build structures to maximize our interagency capabilities.

As our national strategy identified the need for a geographical combatant command specific for Africa, USAFRICOM was designated in 2007 to support that mission and structured to leverage all our elements of power. Vital to success was an

integrated interagency staff to strategically communicate and synchronize our efforts, especially since AFRICOM was not physically located in Africa. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) was tasked to review AFRICOMs initial success for two key areas:

- Efforts to establish the command and strategically communicate its mission
- Progress in integrating personnel from other government agencies (OGA).<sup>31</sup>

The GAO recommendations that follow show clear progress towards interagency coordination and commitments from civilian leadership through oversight and resourcing to our “whole of government” strategic approach. Although one of AFRICOMs’ Deputy Commander’s (Deputy for Civil-Military Activities) is an SES from the State Department – GAO assessed the strategic communications to key stakeholders to be inconsistent. The GAO recommends an increase in two-way communications with local U.S. embassies and global influencers and a more nested delivery of key messages (as Marshall delivered to support the ERP) on their mission and goals.<sup>32</sup>

The GAO acknowledges the good intent, yet slow progress in developing an adequate interagency structure, and more importantly getting the assigned personnel on board. The GAO found that the requirements for 125 interagency staff billets (25% of AFRICOM’s total) was sufficient, yet DOD final authorizations reduced that to 52 OGA staff, which is significantly inadequate to leverage interagency capability. The difficulty remains manning from already “lean OGAs” like the State Department and USAID and only 13 slots were filled (25%) in FY 10, not providing the mandated interagency

capability.<sup>33</sup> However, this is a long-term process (as was the ERP and joint endeavors) and our strategic leaders must persevere to formalize the structures, resources and training required for successful interagency coordination. Our leadership is moving forward as we designated USNORTHCOM with priorities to support (specified tasks to plan for and anticipate contingencies) civil agencies during crisis and have an imbedded interagency planning cell to support. This standing planning cell is a positive evolutionary step towards our strategy that leverages the “whole of government” approach needed to synchronize our elements of power. Both USAFRICOM and USNORTHCOM as the newest combatant commands are examples of our strategic leaders’ recognizing the need for improved interagency coordination with structure built in upfront. Despite initial difficulties (similar to the initial lack of military services support for joint billets 20 years ago) with OGA support to fill these interagency billets, these structures are good test beds to determine actual requirements to synergize our “whole of government” approach.

### Conclusion

The bottom line is that George C. Marshall fully leveraged a set of strategic leader competencies that enabled him to be a decisive leader during the most complex period in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today’s strategic leaders can learn from his example and borrow from his “kit box” to improve strategic communications, their consensus-building ability, and how to synergize interagency coordination. The current administration’s strategy of “an era of engagement” learns from Marshall applying a balanced strategy to effectively strategically communicate and build consensus as we seek “shared responsibility” for global crises. Strategic leaders today recognize the combat multiplier of synchronizing all instruments of power as we move towards a holistic, “whole of



government” approach and interagency coordination. President Obama and the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice are “on message” launching a new ERA of engagement. This is complemented with consistent messages from the rest of the team, Secretaries Clinton and Gates, and Admiral Mullen seeking to build consensus while resolving differences. This represents a “whole of government” approach as Marshall developed, communicated, and executed for post WWII reconstruction and stability. As the current administration seeks “shared responsibility” amongst world stakeholders, the U.S. is not in the global security arena alone and learning from a master strategic communicator and consensus-builder like George C. Marshall will serve today’s leaders well.

Success this century will require balance at all USG levels and a commitment of resources to support strategy based on solid legislation. Effective strategic leaders willing study and learn from historic leaders like George C. Marshall – the professional combat Soldier – the adept national security strategist – the revered statesman.

## Endnotes

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<sup>3</sup> Barry Machado, *In Search of a Useable Past: the Marshall Plan and Postwar Reconstruction Today*, June 4, 2007, 26-27.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, “The World Hangs in the Balance”, 318.

<sup>5</sup> Machado, *In Search of a Useable Past*, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, “The World Hangs in the Balance”, 318.

<sup>7</sup> Machado, *In search of a Useable Past*, 24.

- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, page 26.
- <sup>9</sup> Thompson, "The World Hangs in the Balance", 318.
- <sup>10</sup> President Obama speech at the USMA, April 2009.
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- <sup>12</sup> Admiral Mullen, CJCS, "From the Chairman, Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics", *Joint Force Quarterly*, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2009: 7.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. pg 7.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. pg 8.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. pg 8.
- <sup>16</sup> Charles P. Kindleberger, "In the Halls of the Capitol: a Memoir", *Foreign Affairs* 76, May-June 1997, 186.
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- <sup>18</sup> Machado, *In Search of a Useable Past*, 17.
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- <sup>21</sup> Thompson, "The World Hangs in the Balance", 320.
- <sup>22</sup> Eliot Sorel and Pier Carlo Padoan, *The Marshall Plan, Lessons Learned for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (OECD July 2008), 58.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid, pg 58
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid, pg 59.
- <sup>25</sup> Department of State, *Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review*, State Dept Homepage, July 10, 2009.
- <sup>26</sup> Danielle Kurtzleber and Jim Lobe, "U.S.: Clinton orders review to enhance "Smart Power", *Global Info Network*, July 15, 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> Department of State, QDDR Review.
- <sup>28</sup> Kurtzleber and Lobe, "U.S.: Clinton orders review to enhance "Smart Power".
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office: *Actions needed to address stakeholder concerns, improve interagency collaboration, and determine full costs of AFRICOM* (Washington, DC, U.S. GAO report; Feb 2009) 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pg 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. pg 3.